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C O N F I D E N T I A L ANKARA 001103

SIPDIS

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TAGS: PREL MOPS MARR TU GR

SUBJECT: TURKS AND GREEKS AGREE TO MILITARY CBMS

REF: 04 ANKARA 6443

Classified By: PolMilCounselor Timothy A. Betts. Reason 1.4 (b) and (d) .

¶11. (C) Summary: During the week of February 14, a Turkish General Staff (TGS) delegation visited Athens and reached agreement with the Hellenic General Staff on a series of exchanges to occur over the next year. The Turks also proposed a list of 20 measures for Greece to consider the two doing in 2006. End summary.

¶12. (C) TGS/J5 Greece/Cyprus Director RADM Mucahit Sislioglu led a delegation to Athens the week of February 14. The trip reciprocated one made by a Hellenic General Staff delegation in October 2004. Sislioglu told PolMilCouns on February 25 that the Turks and Greeks reached agreement during their meetings on the following CBMs to be taken during 2005:

-- Service academy exchanges: The commander, two or three officers and six-to-ten students from each of both countries' three service academies will visit their counterparts for a period of about a week. (A total of five visits--a delegation from the Greek Naval academy visited in Oct. 2004.)

-- Joint Staff Colleges exchanges: Same as the academies exchanges, except only each country's joint staff college, not the service staff colleges, will conduct the exchanges.

-- PfP Training Centers: Turkey will have three officers attend one course each (usually one or two weeks) at Greece's Partnership for Peace Training Center. Greece will send three to five officers to Turkey's PfP Training center.

-- Medical Exchange: Turkey's Gulhane Military Hospital in Ankara will develop a virtual exchange over the internet with its Greek counterpart in Athens. Sislioglu did not know the details, but "academic" (Gulhane is a research and teaching hospital) information would be shared, he said.

¶13. (C) The TGS delegation passed to the Greeks a list of 20 other exchanges Turkey was prepared to implement in 2006. Sislioglu did not elaborate on what was on this list, but he did expect the Hellenic General Staff to choose a half dozen or so to work on next year. He expected to receive a response when a Greek delegation visits Ankara in 10-12 months.

¶14. (C) Sislioglu conveyed TGS Chief GEN Hilmi Ozkok's congratulations during a call on the new Hellenic General Staff Chief, Vice Admiral Panagiotis Chinofotis. Sislioglu said both he and Chinofotis had served on their respective National Military Representatives' staffs at NATO from 1993 to 1995. As both were responsible for naval affairs, they met frequently to debate territorial claims in the Aegean and Turkey's "casus belli" declaration on unilateral expansion of Greece's claimed territorial waters. Sislioglu thought that, although VADM Chinofotis still betrayed a "very nationalist" view during their meeting, a frank exchange was better to build mutual understanding. All in all, he was satisfied with the visit.

¶15. (C) Comment: Although none of the CBMs Turkey and Greece have agreed to implement address the core Aegean maritime and aviation issues that continue to grate on their bilateral relationship, these measures should help build better relations between the two militaries. The Turks had been concerned last fall that the Greek military appeared reluctant to move forward on CBMs with Turkey. The recent visit to Turkey by the retiring chief of the Hellenic navy, Sislioglu's visit and the agreement on specific exchanges have relieved that concern. End Comment.

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